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ABSTRACT

Supplementing traditional cultural material with presentation of African elements of the folklore and culture of Latin America is proposed as a means of increasing black student interest in intermediate Spanish language courses. Topics and suggested lesson titles reflecting diverse nonliterary aspects of the black experience in Latin America that can easily be integrated into the intermediate Spanish curriculum at either the secondary or college level are outlined, with citations of resource materials provided for each topic in a bibliography. The resources focus primarily on the two Latin American countries most heavily influenced by African culture, Brazil and Haiti. The topics include: annual Latin American carnival festivities; the story of an enslaved African king; the life of a popular Peruvian saint; the story of a settlement in Brazil; an introduction to the Haitian republic; a legendary South American folk hero's story; an introduction to Afro-Christian religious syncretism; and the music and dances of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. A suggested lesson outline and an Afro-Latin American population map are also provided. (MSE)

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Teaching Afro-Latin American Culture in the Intermediate Spanish Class: Resources and Strategies*

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Rationale for Innovative Lessons

It is a well-known fact that during the intermediate stage of foreign language learning many students often become bored with and indifferent to their classes. On the college level these students invariably cease the study of French, Spanish, or whatever the language may be as soon as they have fulfilled their foreign language requirement.

One of the reasons for attrition among black students in Spanish classes is that quite often these students feel little affinity with the traditional cultural content of intermediate Spanish courses. Although many instructors may consider lessons on the Aztec civilization, the gauchos of the Argentine pampas, and the Christmas posadas of Mexico basic or essential in teaching

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Latin American culture, often such material is not appealing to students, and lessons can consequently become quite tedious. Nevertheless, learning Spanish can actually become a rewarding and truly meaningful experience to these same students and their more enthusiastic classmates as well if the traditional cultural content of intermediate Spanish courses is supplemented by the presentation of African elements of the folklore and culture of Latin America.

The principal objective of this paper is to demonstrate how rarely taught African elements of Latin American folklore and culture, presented in original lesson units, can be incorporated into the traditional Spanish curriculum, enrich the Spanish language program at the intermediate level, and serve as a stimulus to encourage students to continue their studies of Spanish. The use innovative lessons such as those described here is by no means limited to classes of predominately black students; these lessons can be used to enhance and give a new dimension to the teaching of the Spanish language and Latin American culture in any intermediate classroom setting.

Toward a More Global Approach to Latin American Cultures

Through the years, the cultural scope of intermediate-level Spanish textbooks has expanded from its traditional focus on principally Spain and Mexico to one which has gradually come to encompass the entire Hispanic World. The most recent trend has been for textbooks to include not only aspects of Hispanic culture

abroad, but those elements which exist within the borders of the United States as well. Nevertheless, in spite of this relatively global approach to Latin American cultures in textbooks today, in even the most progressive of these books the black contribution to Latin American civilization is still for the most part absent or grossly underrepresented. To correct this error of omission and round out the image of Latin America as presented in our textbooks, the instructor must be innovative to a certain extent, for appropriate supplementary classroom materials are not yet available on a commercial basis.

A very significant innovation involves the expansion of the geographic scope of the traditional Spanish curriculum. Most teachers, in presenting elements of Latin American civilization to classes, generally limit discussions to Hispanic America. This tendency is quite understandable since a great number of us are familiar principally with those areas of the world in which our language specialty is spoken. Furthermore, Spanish language textbooks rarely, if ever, introduce cultural material of countries in which Spanish is not spoken.

With educational responsibility moving toward more and more global objectives, however, this traditional approach to Latin American cultures is no longer adequate. The instructor who desires not only to teach the culture of Latin America in general, but introduce students to elements of the black experience in this region of the world as well can present a complete picture of Latin America by going beyond the geographic confines of Hispanic

America and introducing students to the two Latin American nations whose cultures are most heavily influenced by the effects of the Black Diaspora—namely, Brazil and Haiti.

Both of these countries are non-Hispanic, yet their importance in Latin America cannot be denied. Furthermore, considered within the context of the Black Diaspora, the relevance of Haiti and Brazil becomes even more significant. Brazil, the largest country in Latin America, is the home of the largest population of blacks outside Africa. Haiti, with its almost totally black racial composition, is considered the most African of the American nations. In view of these facts, it is obvious that an insight into the cultures of Brazil and Haiti, regardless of how superficial it may be, can serve only to enrich and enhance the student's knowledge of Latin American civilization as a whole.

Suggested Supplementary Cultural Lessons

The most cursory survey of the works of anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and demographers regarding the African contributions to Latin American civilization will provide the Spanish instructor with such a vast array of information that the selection of topics for use in the intermediate Spanish class may prove somewhat formidable. Outlined below are topics—including suggested lesson titles—reflecting diverse non-literary aspects of the black experience in Latin American which can be easily integrated into the intermediate Spanish curriculum in both secondary schools and colleges. Complete citations of resource materials indicated under each topic are provided in the final bibliography.

"El Carnaval en Latinoamérica"—a description of the annual carnival festivities with an explanation of how, as a result of black input, these celebrations are among the most colorful popular festivities in such countries as Panama, Brazil, Uruguay, and Haiti. An intermediate-level lesson focusing on Carnival, though without mention of the black input, can be found in Lado (1971), while more general presentations of the festival are offered by Milne (1965), Botting (1977), Goldman (1978) and Draeger(1983). For descriptions and explanations of African elements in Latin American Carnivals, see Franceschi (1973), Plácido (1966), Gardel (1967), Carvalho Neto (1967), and Merino (1982).

"La historia de Chico Rey"—the remarkable, true story of an enslaved African king who, on achieving his freedom, succeeds in slowly redeeming his entire community from slavery in colonial Brazil. The most easily accessible account of this intriguing story can be found in Ramos (1951).

"Martín de Porres: el santo de la escoba"—the life of the popular Afro-Peruvian saint, San Martín de Porres, who is often depicted holding a broom, traditional symbol of his humility. A biographical account of Martín de Porres, appropriate for advanced intermediate students, is included in Marbán (1974b). For further material on his life, see Palma (1945) and Freemantle (1978).

"Zumbí—héroe negro del Brasil colonial"—the story of Palmares, the largest maroon settlement in the history of the Western Hemisphere, and the community's legendary leader, Zumbí. The most

readable discussions of this unusual and seldom taught episode of Latin American history are found in Ramos (1951), Irwin (1977), and Kent (1979). For a similar story in a Puerto Rican context, see "Carabalí," in the intermediate Spanish textbook Leyendas de Puerto Rico by Mackley and Martínez-Santiago (1976). For a version of the same story in English translation, see Coll y Toste (1977).

"Haití: pueblo singular de Latinoamérica"—an introduction to Latin America's only black republic. Marbán (1974a) offers a lesson on Haiti appropriate for use in advanced intermediate classes. Background information of a general nature can be found in Arciniegas (1967), Patterson (1976), and Rodman (1978). For stimulating presentations of Haiti's important art movement, see Rodman (1974 and 1978), Stebich (1978), and Schreiner (1981).

"El negrillo del pastoreo: leyenda sudamericana"—the extraordinary tale of a young black lad who is a legendary figure in the folklore of the southern region of South America. Although this legend is part of the gaucho tradition shared by Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, it is in the latter country that the legend is kept alive today. An historical account of both the Uruguayan and Brazilian variations of the legend can be found in Meyer(1968), while the Brazilian version popularized by Lopes Neto (1978) can be found in shortened or simplified formats in Giacomo (1974), Santos (1974) and Lobato (1975).

"Fiesta lucumí en Miami"—an introduction to Afro-Christian religious syncretism through the description of a Santería festival

of Cubans living in Florida. For lessons introducing elements of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican folk religions to advanced intermediate students, see Scholberg (1980) and Overholt (1981). Geneneral descriptive analyses of Santería can be found in González-Wippler (1975 and 1982) and Duany (1982).

"Rumba, bomba y merengue: bailes del Caribe"—an introduction to the music and dances of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. For historical and desciptive information regarding the music of the Hispanic Caribbean, see López Cruz (1967), Ramírez (1974), Moldes (1975), and Colón (1983).

The structure of these supplementary lessons should be sufficiently flexible in order that they may be used in classes which stress reading, culture, conversation, or any combination of these. Regarding lesson format, there are various possibilities among which the following is suggested:

a) a brief passage which introduces the theme of the lesson;
b) an original reading selection, which constitutes the body of the lesson;
c) notes explaining difficult vocabulary and passages as well as clarifying cultural, geographical, and historical references;
d) suggested supplementary readings for students who may wish to explore topics further through readings in Spanish and English;
e) exercises to check content comprehension and to lead

students to learn and use vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and grammatical forms and patterns found in the reading selection.

The amount of time necessary to teach each lesson adequately will vary according to instructor and length of class period. Nevertheless, lessons should be sufficiently succinct for all material to be covered satisfactorily in two or three fifty-minute class meetings.

In order to have a better idea of the type of material suggested for supplementary cultural lessons, let us examine briefly the story that serves as the basis for the lesson "La historia de Chico Rey." Movie viewers who saw the Brazilian film Xica da Silva (directed by Carlos Diegues, 1976), the story of a black domestic servant who became the bold and brazen mistress of a Portuguese tax collector, already have an insight into how a few slaves were able to improve their lot considerably in colonial Brazil. Much more dramatic than the life of Xica da Silva, however, was that of her contemporary, Chico Rey, who is considered the first abolitionist leader in Brazil.

Chico Rey was a minor African king who, together with his family and entire clan, was captured, sold into slavery, and transported to Brazil during the first half of the 18th century. During the crossing of the Atlantic, all the members of his family except one son died. In Brazil the entire cargo was sold to the owner of a gold mine in the town of Villa Rica. Baptized with the name

Francisco, the African went by the name Chico, which in Brazil is the common nickname for Francisco.

At that time in Brazil, on Sundays and holidays slaves were allowed to work for their own benefit. It is said that Chico swore that as king in his own right he would strive to continue as king, even though exiled far from his homeland. Thus, he diligently worked on Sundays and holidays and little by little amassed his earnings until he was able to purchase the freedom of his son. Continuing to work and save his earnings, now with the help of his freed son, Chico soon bought his own freedom. Toiling together, father and son liberated one by one other members of their clan who then joined in the task, freeing more and more until they had liberated all of their people in Villa Rica.

Once this job was completed, the ex-slaves applied themselves to the task of freeing members of other clans from slavery. Eventually Chico and his community actually bought one of the gold mines in the region and set up a kind of private court in Villa Rica. Once again Chico was the sovereign of his people, for they proclaimed him king—Chico Rey—and he ruled what local historians have called a miniature state within a state. Chico Rey subsequently remarried and with his wife, son, and daughter-in-law formed a royal court in Villa Rica. The community chose as its patron saint the Ethiopian martyr Santa Ifigenia and erected a magnificent church at the edge of the town.

Once a year the royal family and court would take part in a procession to this church, where a high mass was celebrated.

Afterwards the cortege would dance through the streets to the accompaniment of rhythms played on African instruments. According to tradition, for this occasion the women powdered their hair with golddust and on the return of the procession to the church they washed their hair in a font set beneath an image of Santa Ifigenia. The golddust thus deposited in the font was utilized to redeem more Africans from slavery.

It is not suprising that among black and other culturally deprived students this lesson arouses much more interest than do the typical lessons on the gauchos, the Aztec civilization, or the Incas. With such material classes can become imbued with new excitement reflected in greater student effort and thought-provoking questions regarding aspects of Latin American culture.

Audio-Visual Aids: Availability and Appropriateness

Audio-visual materials are extremely effective instruments for the reinforcement and enhancement of the teaching of culture in the classroom. Films, filmstrips, slides, videotapes, audio recordings, and, of course, actual items of the culture being discussed are all helpful in rendering cultural lessons more meaningful for students. Unfortunately, however, appropriate audio-visual materials featuring the black elements of Latin America are yet to be made available commercially.

Consequently, of the eight supplementary lesson units suggested, only two can currently be followed up with commercially prepared audio-visual materials: the lessons on Haiti and Carnival. Although various films and slides featuring Carnival are

available, none focuses specifically on the black contribution to the festival. These materials, however, are useful in demonstrating that in Latin America a Carnival is not an amusement park or school bazaar, but a colorful, popular street festival.

Spanish-language material on Haiti is almost non-existent. The readily available English-language materials on Haiti, on the other hand, are too often geared toward promoting tourism—not culture for the sake of culture—and are consequently for the most part inappropriate for our purposes. For example, the narration of documentaries on Haiti are often loaded with culturally biased terms: the Haitians are frequently referred to as "the natives," and the folk religion Voodoo is called "black magic." Certainly materials of this nature are to be avoided, for they serve only to prejudice opinions or to reinforce any preexisting negative stereotyping to which students may have already been exposed.

On the other hand, some potentially good materials, for one reason or another, may lack the authenticity necessary for the implementation of our goals. A rather good filmstrip on Haiti, for example, is marred by its musical background. The music, Calypso played on steel drums, is undoubtedly Caribbean, but not Haitian. Steel drums are typical of the islands of Trinidad and Tobago.

At any rate, when involved in innovative teaching, the instructor learns to be resourceful and to explore whatever reliable sources are accessible—to seize every opportunity to obtain materials that may be useful in illustrating cultural lessons.

Slides are particularly useful, for, with the help of a photographer or audio-visual specialist, illustrations from books, posters, and even postcards can be reproduced on slides for classroom use.

Conclusion

The supplementary lessons described in this paper have been conceived with a view toward complementing the traditional cultural content of intermediate Spanish classes. Accordingly, such lessons are to be used in conjunction with a conventional textbook which may present la fiesta brava, aspects of the Inca civilization, and other elements of Latin American culture. Periodically, however, the instructor can introduce one of the supplementary lessons, which should stimulate students' interest and whet their appetites for further doses of Hispanic culture.

The relevance of such lessons for students at predominantly black institutions is unquestionable. Such material, nevertheless, has value for all students, for it adds a new dimension to the presentation of Latin American culture, allowing our students to become aware of various questions of language and society so that, in this shrinking world of today, these students may expand their horizons and approach ethnic as well as linguistic diversity in an objective manner.

Población de Ascendencia Africana en la América Latina

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Audio-Visual Resources

"Carnaval en Latinoamérica"

Babbit Film Specialties
P. O. Box 10
Park Forest, Ill. 60466

films and videocassette films:
Carnaval en Río
Carnival in Rio

Educational Filmstrips
1401 - 19th Street
Huntsville, Texas 77340

filmstrips with audiocassettes:
Carnaval en México
Carnival in México

Embassy of Brazil
3006 Massachusetts Ave., N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20008
tel. (202) 797-0100

films:
Carnival in Rio
Rio, Carnival, and Samba

Embassy of Uruguay
1918 F Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20006
tel. (202) 331-1314

slides:with audiocassettes:
This is Uruguay

Museum of Modern Art of Latin America
1889 F Street, N. W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
tel. (202) 789-6021

slides
Mardi Gras Carnival
(#143 - Haiti)
Rio de Janeiro: Carnaval
(#114 - Brazil)

"Haití: pueblo singular de Latinoamérica"

Films: Rhythms of Haiti Aspects of the culture and folklore of Haiti with emphasis on information of interest to tourists.
Museum of Modern Art of Latin America, see above

Black Dawn An animated film offering a view of Haitian culture, religion, and history through paintings and drawings by thirteen of Haiti's foremost artists.
Icarus Films. 200 Park Ave. South, New York, N. Y. 10003. tel. (212) 674-3375.

Haitian Song A portrait of life in a small village in rural Haiti. Through detailed scenes, the film follows two individuals through the cycles of a week: the market on Tuesday; the cockfight on Saturday; the dance on Sunday. Narration in Creole with English subtitles.
Distributed by filmmaker: Karen Kramer, tel. (212) 691-3470.

(First page of sample lesson showing introduction and initial paragraphs to the South American legend "El negrillo del Pastoreo.")

El Negrillo del Pastoreo

En la tierra del gaucho, principalmente en esas grandes extenciones de praderas que caracterizan el Uruguay y el extremo sur del Brasil, al perder[1] una cosa en el campo suelen los habitantes ofrecerle una vela a un chiquillo negro, rogándole que les ayude a recuperar el objeto perdido. Dicen que, por más escondido que esté lo perdido,[2] el negrillo no deja de encontrarlo.[3]

¿Quién es tal chiquillo y por qué se le piden cosas perdidas? Esto nos lo revela una conocidísima leyenda de la región.

- -

Hace mucho tiempo había un estanciero muy rico que era malvado con sus esclavos. Entre los numerosos esclavos de que era amo y señor, tenía un chico bien negro de unos trece o catorce años, a quien todos llamaban sencillamente el Negrillo. Como no tenía ni nombre ni padrinos, se decía que el Negrillo era ahijado de la Santa Virgen, madrina de quien no la tiene.[4]

Todas las madrugadas el Negrillo montaba su caballo predilecto y salía a pastorear la tropilla[5] de su patrón. Cierto día el estanciero, diciendo que su caballo era el más veloz de la región, desafió a un vecino a una carrera. Apostó gran cantidad de dinero y mandó al Negrillo que montara el caballo. Y sucedió que casi al final de la carrera, cuando el esclavito estaba para ganar,[6] el caballo se asustó y perdió la carrera.

El estanciero se enojó mucho por haber perdido la apuesta y le echó toda la culpa al Negrillo.[7] Tan pronto llegaron a casa mandó atar al esclavo[8] por las muñecas a un poste y en seguida le dio varios azotes. Al día siguiente, de madrugada, le dio como castigo